



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2017

The Honorable John A. Culberson  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-309, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable José Serrano  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Serrano,

As you begin work on the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2018, I respectfully request the Committee include highest possible level of appropriations to combat gang activity within the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs and the State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs.

The United States is once again experiencing another spike in gang-related activity. In 2016, there were 796 recorded murders in the Chicago area, representing a 57% increase over 2015. For the third year in a row, Los Angeles saw a year-over-year increase in homicides, ending at nearly 300 for 2016. The greater Washington Metropolitan Area is also experiencing an increase in gang activity, specifically in the counties outside of Washington and Baltimore. Last year, Fairfax County, Virginia experienced an increase in homicides; Prince William County, Virginia's increase brought it to the highest murder rate in at least 30 years; and Montgomery County, Maryland experienced its highest rate since 2002, with 30 total homicides in 2016. Besides an alarming increase in murder rates, each of these areas has something in common—they are all experiencing increased gang presence and activity.

In my district, which encompasses much of Northern Virginia, the gang known as MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha), continues to expand its influence in the United States. FBI investigations show that MS-13 is present in almost every state across the U.S. and continues to grow its membership, now targeting younger recruits more than ever before.

While the FBI is doing a good job coordinating intelligence efforts and undertaking federal law enforcement actions, more federal resources are needed for our state and local law enforcement officers who are dealing with this violence and crime every day. That is why, in addition to increased appropriations, I am requesting inclusion of language in the Committee Report to accompany the FY 2018 bill. Specifically, I request that language similar to the following be included under the section titled "Federal Bureau of Investigation":

"Gang Activity.—The Committee continues to be concerned about the rise in gang activity across the country. According to the National Gang Center, between 1996 and 2003, the nation saw a roughly 35% decrease in the overall number of gangs. But between 2003 and 2012, the date of the most recent statistics from the NGC, those successes had been completely lost. Certain transnational criminal organizations, including Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, have been resurgent in recent years after a brief lull in criminal activity, and have expanded operations in various areas in the country ranging from California to Georgia, and from Virginia to New York. The Committee directs the Bureau to continue and expand its task force activity, as well as its partnerships with state, local, and tribal law enforcement organizations, in order to undermine these organizations and reverse the criminal trends associated with their resurgence."

I recognize the challenges of the current fiscal environment and thank you for your effort and dutiful consideration of this request. Your leadership on the Appropriations Committee is most appreciated.

Sincerely,



Barbara Comstock  
Member of Congress  
Virginia's Tenth District